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GHOST RIDER
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MOTORCYCLE STUNTMAN JOHNNY BLAZE HAS ALWAYS HAD HIS HEART IN THE RIGHT PLACE... AND MADE ALL THE WRONG DECISIONS. WHEN HIS FOSTER FATHER WAS DYING OF CANCER, JOHNNY SOLD HIS SOUL TO THE DEVIL FOR A CURE. THOUGH THE CANCER WENT INTO REMISSION, A DANGEROUS STUNT CLAIMED THE MAN'S LIFE ANYWAY... AND THE DEVIL RETURNED FOR BLAZE'S SOUL.

JOHNNY WAS CURSED TO SERVE AS THE GHOST RIDER, SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE, A HORRIFYING LEATHER-CLAD BIKER WHOSE SKULL FACE WAS LIT BY A FLAME THAT COULD NOT BE EXTINGUISHED. WHENEVER HE WAS IN THE PRESENCE OF EVIL, HE WOULD TRANSFORM INTO THIS SPIRIT WARRIOR AND DISPENSE BLOODY RETRIBUTION UPON EARTH'S SINNERS.

THAT IS, UNTIL JOHNNY BLAZE WAS CAST INTO HELL.

EVER SINCE, HE SPENT HIS DAYS RACING A DEMONIC HORDE TO HELL'S GATES, REACHING TOWARDS IMPOSSIBLE FREEDOM, ONLY TO BE DEVOURED AND DEFEATED MERE INCHES AWAY FROM HIS LIBERATION.

UNWILLING TO REMAIN IMPRISONED, GHOST RIDER ENLISTED A DEMON NAMED GREEXIX TO HELP HIM BURROW OUT OF HELL. UNAWARE THAT GREEXIX WAS ACTUALLY A DISGUISED LUCIFER, INTENT ON ESCAPING HELL HIMSELF.

THOUGH JOHNNY BLAZE DID FINALLY RETURN TO EARTH, HE INADVERTENTLY BROUGHT THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS ALONG WITH HIM. SOON AFTER, THE TWO MET AGAIN OUTSIDE AN ARIZONA GAS STATION. AMIDST THE VIOLENCE, INNOCENTS WERE KILLED AND LUCIFER WAS SEEMINGLY DESTROYED... THAT IS, UNTIL HE SPRANG UP AGAIN MOMENTS LATER, TERRORIZING GHOST RIDER IN A NUMBER OF HUMAN FORMS.

AND THEN GHOST RIDER WAS SUDDENLY SPIRITED AWAY TO ANOTHER LOCALE—A GRAVEYARD WHERE DOCTOR STRANGE WAS WAITING. THE GOOD DOCTOR ADVISED HIM TO CEASE HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH LUCIFER. BUT THE RIDER IGNORED HIM. BELIEVING STRANGE WAS THE DEVIL IN ANOTHER OF HIS DISGUISES. IN THE ENSUING BATTLE, GHOST RIDER ENSNARED STRANGE IN HIS CHAINS AND THEN EXPOSED HIM TO A DEVASTATING NEW POWER...

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I KNOW WHAT THIS IS...I'VE SEEN THIS BEFORE.
THE KID, DANNY KETCH--HE USED TO DO THIS WHEN HE WAS THE GHOST RIDER.
THIS IS THE PENANCE STARE.
IT'S NOT SOMETHING THAT I'VE USED BEFORE... NOT SOMETHING I KNEW I COULD EVEN TAP INTO. BUT THEN AGAIN, I'M NOT CALLING THE SHOTS RIGHT NOW.
BURN, YOU SON OF A BITCH!
IT IS, THE SPIRIT OF VENGEANCE, AND IT'S TELLING ME THAT I'M CAPABLE OF MORE POWER THAN I'D EVER REALIZED.
BURN!
AS FAR AS I KNOW, THE PENANCE STARE FORCES THE GUILTY TO EXPERIENCE ALL OF THE PAIN AND TORMENT THAT THEY'VE CAUSED.
THERE'S ONLY ONE PROBLEM, AND I DON'T SEE IT UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE:
YOU'RE... NOT HIM.
YOU'RE NOT LUCIFER.
THIS IS AN INNOCENT MAN.

AND JUST LIKE THAT, I'M BACK IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT...
...AND HOLDING THE BAG.
I SCREWED UP.
VICIOUS CYCLE
CONCLUSION
DANIEL WAY SCRIPT
JAVIER SALTARES BREAKDOWNS
MARK TEXEIRA FINISHES
DAN BROWN COLORS
VC'S JOE CARAMAGNA LETTERS
MICHAEL O'CONNOR ASSISTANT EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER

OH, GOD
BREATHE... C'MON! BREATHE!
YOU HAVE TO HELP ME, DAMMIT...
...BECAUSE I CAN'T HELP YOU.
I DON'T HAVE THAT KINDA POWER.
YOU HAVE MORE POWER THAN YOU KNOW, JOHNNY BLAZE...

...MORE POWER THAN ANY HUMAN *SHOULD* HAVE.

ARE...
...ARE YOU AN ANGEL?
TO SOME...
...BUT TO STEPHEN STRANGE, I AM SIMPLY A FRIEND.
MY NAME IS NUMECET.
I'M SORRY--I THOUGHT HE WAS...
...LUCIFER IN DISGUISE. I...
...I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!
THERE IS MUCH YOU DO NOT KNOW...

DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON?
WHAT IS LUCIFER UP TO?
WHAT DID HE MEAN BY "SIX HUNDRED AND SIXTY-FIVE MORE CHANCES"?
IT IS NOT...
I CANNOT INVOLVE MYSELF IN THIS--
S-SSHHHHNK!
TOO LATE

HOW DARE YOU—!
I WANT ANSWERS!
YOU WANT VENGEANCE!
EXACTLY.
YOU POOR SOUL...
...DO YOU NOT KNOW WHERE THAT PATH ULTIMATELY LEADS?
YEAH.
I DO.
I'VE BEEN THERE...AND BACK.
AND I BROUGHT THE DEVIL WITH ME.

SO U KNOW WHAT HIS PLAN IS...
...OR HOW I CAN STOP HIM--
YOU CAN'T STOP HIM, JOHNNY...
...BECAUSE YOU'RE PART OF HIS PLAN.
...WHAT?
THE LAWS OF THE MORTAL PLANE ARE MUCH DIFFERENT THAN THOSE OF THE IMMORTAL PLANE--THIS WORLD IS A MUCH... SMALLER PLACE.
IT WAS NEVER MEANT TO HOST A CELESTIAL FORM OF LUCIFER'S CALIBER--NOR HAS IT EVER..
...EXCEPT IN THE FORM OF AN APPARITION.
UNTIL NOW.
NO.
WHEN YOU CROSSED OVER FROM THE CELESTIAL PLANE...

"...YOU CROSSED OVER WHOLLY INTACT.
"LUCIFER DID NOT.

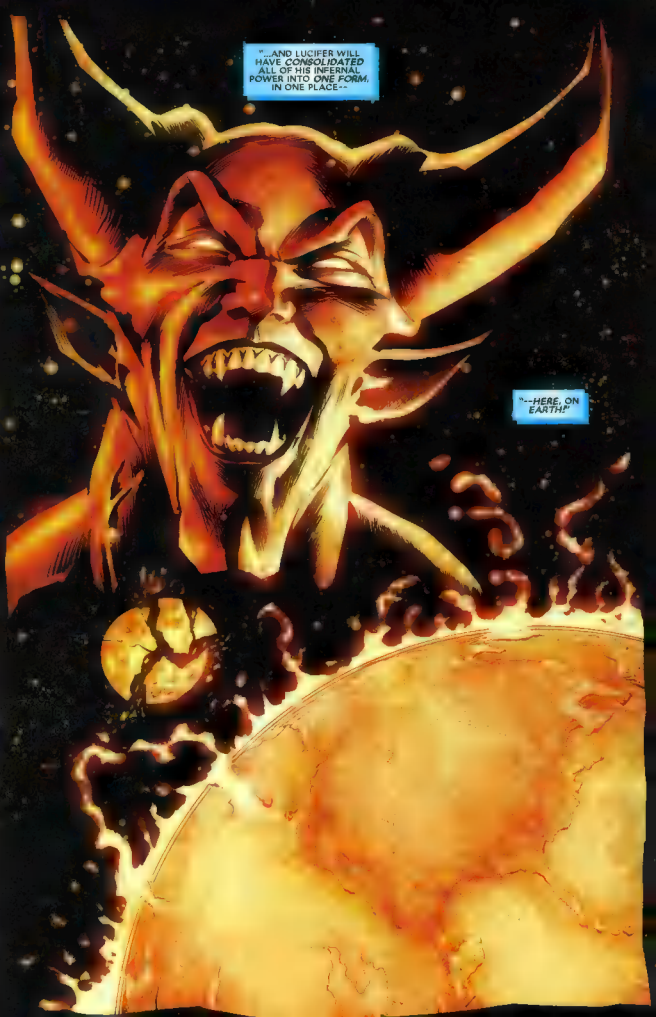
"YOU--AND ONLY YOU--POSSESS THE ABILITY TO BE BETWEEN [redacted] IS [redacted] HE USED YOU [redacted] ESCAPE.
"BUT UNLIKE YOU, LUCIFER [redacted] NO PHYSICAL [redacted] ON THE MORTAL PLANE [redacted] WHICH TO RESIDE--SO, WHEN [redacted]
"...HE DISINTEGRATED."
LIKE A FALLING STAR.

BUT...HE'S HERE! I'VE BEEN HIM!
YOU'VE ONLY SEEN PIECES OF HIM.
"WHEN LUCIFER'S CELESTIAL FORM DISINTEGRATED, THE SEPARATE PARTICLES RAINED DOWN ON EARTH--
"--COMING TO REST IN THE BODIES OF THOSE WHO WERE, AT THAT MOMENT--
"--CROSSING OVER TO THE IMMORTAL PLANE, TAKING POSSESSION OF THEIR SOULS...
"...AND REAWAKENING THEM."

HOW MANY?
I SAID, HOW MANY?
SURELY, YOU ALREADY KNOW THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST, JOHNNY...

"IT IS SIX HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIX."

MY GOD...SO MANY...
HOW AM I GONNA STOP ALL OF--
YOU [illegible]'T, JOHNNY--YOU MUSTN'T!
BUT I HAVE TO--IT'S MY RESPONSIBILITY!
BUT THAT'S WHAT LUCIFER [illegible]ANTS FROM YOU!
HE WANTS YOU TO KILL HIM!
WHAT?!
"WHEN [illegible] OF THE HOST [illegible] THAT LUCIFER [illegible] USING IS DESTROYED...
"...THE [illegible] WILL BECOME THAT MUCH [illegible]
"IF YOU CONTINUE ON YOUR QUEST FOR VENGEANCE--IF YOU DO WHAT [illegible] WANTS YOU TO DO--EVENTUALLY, ONLY [illegible] WILL [illegible]...


"...AND LUCIFER WILL HAVE CONSOLIDATED ALL OF HIS INFERNAL POWER INTO ONE FORM, IN ONE PLACE--
"--HERE, ON EARTH!"

BUT WHY ME?
HE CAN GET ANYONE TO JUST... KILL HIM!
AND HE WILL... BUT THAT WILL ONLY WORK UP TO A POINT.
SOON, [redacted] SEPARATE HOST BODIES WILL BECOME TOO POWERFUL FOR ANYONE BUT YOU TO DESTROY.
THAT'S WHY HE NEEDS YOU.
WHY [redacted] HE HIMSELF?
I BELIEVE YOU ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER...
SUICIDES GO TO HELL, JOHNNY.
LUCIFER HAS WAITED FOR EONS TO ESCAPE FROM HELL, JOHNNY...
...HE'S NOT GOING TO SIMPLY VOLUNTEER TO GO BACK.

THEN THAT'S WHAT I'M GONNA DO.
AND NOT YOU...
OR ANYBODY ELSE...
CAN STOP ME.

VWRRRRRRROOOOOOMMMMM!

GHOST WRITERS

You Flameheads rock! We've gotten so many great letters and awesome pictures of Ghost Rider drawings, tattoos, and extensive collections. I work on a lot of books for a plethora of different characters, but this is by far the most devoted fan base I've ever seen! Don't believe me? Check out some of the best letters of the month below.

Hey Ghost Writers,

As someone who has never before read a single issue of *Ghost Rider*, I'd like to say, "Hey! That was a great first issue!" I almost didn't buy it, but I decided to give it a chance and I'm really glad that I did! Great art, great story, very fun!

Now, with that said, I'd like to say this: All I know about Ghost Rider is that Nic Cage will be playing him in the movie, so I'm really hoping the creative team can keep this book accessible to myself and other new GR fans. One of the most disappointing and prevalent trends in comics is to kill off new readership by driving away those who aren't up-to-date on the latest and greatest events of the past twenty years (see: X-Men). This first issue is a great start in welcoming new readership, and I hope you can re-launch this character and book without relying on the past as a crutch or safety net.

After ten years, you're going to have a lot of new readers picking up this book. Don't drive them off.

Thanks,
Brandon Beiter
Internet

That's some excellent advice, Brandon, and we'll do our best to oblige. Incidentally, next issue is perfect for some of our newer readers as it reveals Johnny Blaze's origins and how he came to be the Ghost Rider.

Wow,

I just finished reading the first issue of the new *Ghost Rider* monthly series (oh man, it feels so good saying "monthly series"). I used to be a huge comic book fan, but when *Ghost Rider* came to a grinding halt, I stopped collecting. It's been at least 10 years since I've bought a comic book.

But when I learned that a Ghost Rider movie was coming I started looking deeper and saw that a new series was coming out. I went to the nearest comic store and bought the first issue. So many memories were brought back. I loved the issue, and the artwork was amazing.

The only thing is that I hope you bring back Dan sometime. I never really read the first *Ghost Rider* when JB was flaming about so I'm hoping we get to find out what Dan is up to. Please, pretty please...

So until Ghost Rider starts singing covers of Britney Spears, Make Mine Marvel Again...

William Null
Lancaster, PA

William, we're glad to have an old school Flamehead like yourself back on the book. As far as Danny Ketch returning, I can't make any promises... but it would be cool, wouldn't it?

Dear *Ghost Rider* Creative Team,

It's such a relief to see the new ongoing *Ghost Rider* series on the comic book shelves next to the usual "superhero" mags. I've collected all of the *Ghost Rider* 2nd series, one-shots, and limited series, and the *Spirit of Vengeance* spin-off series back in the day.

And incidentally, I've been serving in the US Marine Corps since 1996 and have been all over the world since before I was 24 (I'm 28 now)! I thought I'd send you these pics of my tattoo of Ghost Rider on my arm that I got in the Philippines. We've been through hell and then some!

Until Vengeance joins DC Comics, make mine Marvel!

Sgt J. Rowe
HSSN ADO
29 Palms, CA

Thanks for the awesome pic, Sergeant! It's an honor to have you onboard.

Dear Editor,

I must confess that I was less than impressed with Ghost Rider's last two limited series and was determined to pass up the current run so soon after my last disappointment, but I decided to take a chance and ordered the first issue from my online dealer. Within a few days I was at a local comic shop picking up the second issue. What a concept! 666 chances at redemption—and with a nasty piece of work like Lucifer, you can bet our vengeful hero is going to need every last one. I have to admit that Way, Texeira and Saltares have gotten me excited for a character that hasn't been interesting in a decade and a half. I love it when you guys dust off a character and make them fresh and interesting.

Speaking of renewed characters, can we expect a meeting with Marvel's other recent revival – Moon Knight? Moon Knight is a mystical character at his core and it would be interesting to integrate into the story the notions of the afterlife from both an ancient Egyptian and Christian viewpoint.

If the quality of this current incarnation stays strong I hope to see *Ghost Rider* around for another 664 issues.

Spider-Bob
Arlington, TX

Hey Spider-Bob! We're doubly psyched that you're digging both *GR* and *Moon Knight*! Both books are the pride and joy of the Marvel Knights Office and if we could think of a great story that would bring these two insane characters together, we'd do it in a heartbeat.

Dear Marvel,

I wasn't all that fussed about *Ghost Rider* and only really tried the comic so that I could familiarize myself with his origins before the Nicholas Cage movie comes out next year. However, I must admit that issue 2 was mind-blowing. The artwork was amazing. The battle between Ghost Rider and the devil was an edge-of-your-seat, adrenaline-pumping extravaganza. As a result, I am now reluctantly hooked and will be picking up each issue. You guys are obliterating DC at the minute. Keep it up.

Just one question: is the Stephen Strange character at the end of issue 2 the same Steve Strange who was one of the New Romantic pioneers in the 80's and was arrested a few years ago for stealing a Teletubby? I'm afraid I don't have an encyclopedic knowledge of the Marvel Universe.

Yours,

Stephen Mc Corriston
Coleraine
County Londonderry
Northern Ireland

Yes, it's definitely the same Stephen Strange. The Sorcerer Supreme loves himself some Teletubbies. In fact, he's even jury-rigged his Wand of Watoomb to function as a remote control for turning on those televisions in their stomachs.

Dear Marvel,

I have never written to a comic before, but always wanted to. The new *Ghost Rider* series is what finally compelled me to give it a try. I have been reading and collecting *Ghost Rider* since I was old enough to read (I'm 36, so it's been a while).

I first discovered Ghosty as a child, spending time with my uncle, who was a biker as well as a comic fan. Tragically, he died on his bike when I was 10 years old. Since that time, *Ghost Rider* has been very important to me.

I have enjoyed all of the *Ghost Rider* runs, but this new series has me really excited; Tex and Saltares have been my personal favorite *Ghost Rider* artists of all time and the story has me excited to see what direction it will be taking.

It seems to have elements of the old Johnny Blaze stories, as well as elements of the Dan Ketch stories. I was happy with the miniseries that came out, but the stories just didn't thrill me the way this new series is.

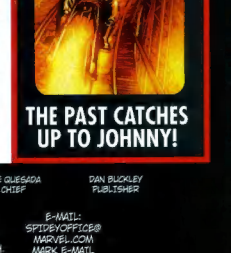
I am probably one of the biggest *Ghost Rider* fans around and am very sentimental about this book. I hope that this run is successful and I am also looking forward to the upcoming movie. My wife and I aren't keen on Nicholas Cage as Johnny, but we'll reserve any comment on that until we see the movie.

Well, that's all for now. Keep up the good work, and until I join Ghost Rider and my uncle, I'll be making mine Marvel, as I always have.

Sincerely,
James Hayton

Well, dame, James. We had so many great letters this month, but yours took the Flaming Skull. We'll do our best to keep providing great Ghost Rider stories in honor of your uncle and all the other Riders out there.

NEXT ISSUE:



THE PAST CATCHES UP TO JOHNNY!

ADAM ROSENLUND
SPECIAL THANKS

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...NUMECET?
WHY... ARE YOU CRYING?

BECAUSE HE'S RIGHT...
Next: Epilogue--The Day Johnny Came Home

OROBOROS - DCP

KRYPTONIA - DCP